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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 8 October 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia)

later: Mr. ZLENKO (Ukraine)
(Vice-President)

- General debate [9] (continued)

- Tentative programme of work

- General debate [9] (continued)

Statements made by

Mr. Hurst (Antigua and Barbuda)
Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia)
Mr. Peters (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)
Mr. Rogers (Belize)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 9 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. HURST (Antigua and Barbuda): My delegation extends hearty congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. Your assumption of this high office evinces Saudi Arabia's new and more prominent role in international affairs. Antigua and Barbuda applauds you and I assure you of the firm support of my delegation.

We also wish to confer our sincerest commendations on your predecessor, Foreign Minister Guido de Marco of Malta. His skills as a reformer and as a diplomat were made evident throughout the proceedings of the forty-fifth session and his outstanding leadership considerably enhanced the functioning of the machinery of the United Nations. Malta and Saudi Arabia must be congratulated on the outstanding role each has played at the commencement of a decade of great change.

Ten years ago my island country submitted to the Security Council an application for admission to membership in the United Nations. That event marked the end of 350 years of colonial history and the beginning of my people's complete responsibility for their own affairs. After one decade of independence my country is pleased to report that, despite current financial difficulties, it has experienced 10 consecutive years of uninterrupted economic growth, that our gross domestic product has more than doubled since 1981, that personal incomes have shown a corresponding increase, that my country's population growth has been limited to less than 1 per cent per annum, that our infant mortality rate has been significantly reduced, and

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that we have remained peaceful and fairly prosperous. These results were forecast by my Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Vere Cornwall Bird, who at the dawn of independence promised results in exchange for hard work and discipline.

As Antigua and Barbuda celebrates 10 prosperous years of independence and 10 years of United Nations membership, it pleases my delegation to welcome two more island States to membership in this body. The Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, as new Members of the United Nations, are assured of the unfailing support of Antigua and Barbuda.

All States, whether large or small, powerful or powerless, need the United Nations. But for small States membership in this Organization is rooted in the need to ensure universal compliance with international law. The safeguarding of the sovereignty of small States can best be assured through an unfailing commitment by all States, especially the large and powerful, to abide always by the rule of law.

Iraq's attempted annexation of its small neighbour Kuwait can be deemed this decade's most flagrant example of total disregard for international law. However, the willingness of the United Nations Security Council to authorize the use of a coalition force to restore Kuwait's sovereignty is a shining example of the triumph of international cooperation. The United States and the other coalition partners are to be highly commended for their willingness to commit manpower and resources to so noble a cause. Small nations must, however, find an alternate means of deterring aggressors, knowing that large and powerful States may not always be willing to come to the collective defence of economically insignificant, non-oil-producing countries.

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But the Iraq-Kuwait crisis nevertheless provided clear evidence that the decades-old rivalry between the world's super-Powers has receded and that the cold war has ended. Further, the crisis in the Gulf also suggested that small States would not be afforded any greater opportunity to help shape world events, except as victims.

Recent changes in Eastern Europe may, however, have altered that old order of exclusion. The three small Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are held in high esteem for having reasserted their sovereignty without simultaneously receiving a pledge of countervailing super-Power support.

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In fact, many small countries applauded as the courageous citizens of these three small republics, dwelling in the shadow of a giant, challenged another, much mightier than they and prevailed. The President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is duly praised for correcting 50 years of injustice while fostering peace. Antigua and Barbuda extends hearty congratulations and a warm welcome to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as new members of this family of sovereign and equal, independent nation-States.

Yet we caution our new Members to bear in mind that ours is a world in which small States are frequently marginalized and therefore wield little influence. Our 10 years of membership in the Organization confirms that the General Assembly remains the principal forum from which small voices can be heard and measured influence exercised; it is the foremost platform for practising and promoting multilateralism. Antigua and Barbuda will continue to advocate the multilateral approach to problem-solving, convinced that it is the best mechanism for promoting international cooperation and the peaceful coexistence of sovereign States.

In our view, the multilateral approach contributed to the planting of democracy in Haiti, and it is this approach that will help uproot the brutal dictatorship that has seized power there. Antigua and Barbuda condemns unreservedly last Monday's military assault on the budding democratic process in Haiti. We urge the international community to continue to give to Haiti's people the support they require for restoring constitutional government. The multilateral approach will surely succeed in removing the usurpers from their perch and reinstating President Aristide to his legitimate office.

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We are also convinced that it is the continued reliance upon the multilateral approach that has contributed overwhelmingly to the death throes of apartheid in racist South Africa. Apartheid will be dismantled, because the world's nations have decided that such a practice is an evil too pernicious to exist, and until such time as the last vestige of apartheid disappears South Africa cannot expect to be included in this family of nations. Antigua and Barbuda continues to press for the use of sanctions as a means of propelling progress in ending apartheid. A fully democratic South Africa, where each adult has one equal vote, is the sure test of apartheid's demise.

Our unrelenting efforts to help end apartheid form part of Antigua and Barbuda's sacred commitment to the promotion of human rights. Each year, my delegation also brings to this community's attention the violation of the human rights of the world's indigenous peoples. It is our considered view that the powerless peoples who inhabit the world's shrinking forests and the Earth's remotest corners need United Nations protection if they are not to be brutally exterminated. Land-grabbers, gold-miners, ranchers, logging companies, criminals and countless others have invaded their ancestral homelands, causing death, disease, degradation and massive disruption of traditional life - in short, genocide, misery and violation is the lot of the world's indigenous peoples.

The islands of our Caribbean were once the home of several peoples that were virtually eliminated by war and slavery beginning in 1492. If the history of my region is any guide, then we fear the worst for the world's

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indigenous peoples. With increased United Nations protection, however, that brutal history need not be repeated.

The equally brutal assault on the Earth's environment, unleashed by humanity since the start of the industrial revolution, cannot continue. The fragile ecological balance that has slowly evolved on our planet during its 3,500-million-year existence now shows extreme signs of wear. That humanity cannot march along on its present course for another 100 years is most evident. Ozone-layer depletion, global warming, sea-level rise, frequent and violent hurricanes, creeping deserts and calamitous climate change threaten mankind's very existence. But the most immediate threats are to low-lying island countries like my own and others in the Caribbean and the Pacific. Ours are the front-line countries that would suffer the severest consequences of even a mild climate change. Island-States like my own, which have inflicted no harm on the environment, now stand in real danger of being submerged in a swollen ocean.

Unless the world's developed nations radically alter their production methods and their consumer lifestyles, there will be no third and fourth generations upon whom sins can be visited. And unless the world's developing nations can acquire and introduce sustainable development technologies, their ever-poorer, ever-expanding human populations will become the hapless victims of environmental disasters too catastrophic to contemplate.

Island-States of the world, aware of the unique environmental dangers that face island populations, have united under this common banner here at the United Nations. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), proposed by Trinidad and Tobago and ably chaired by Vanuatu, has worked diligently to

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articulate a common position during the negotiations that will culminate in the convention on climate change. Antigua and Barbuda, as an equal partner in AOSIS, intends to live up to its responsibility in forging this convention. Our delegation will play an ever fuller role in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Brazil in June 1992. We hail Brazil for its leadership role in that regard, conscious of the need to address simultaneously the twin issues of environment and development.

Though the world's eyes are focused on Brazil, Antigua and Barbuda would like to draw some attention to Antarctica. That frozen and unspoiled continent must not become the possession of large States alone; it is our considered view that Antarctica should be brought under the umbrella of control of the United Nations. Antarctica is too important a barometer of the Earth's environmental health, too significant a source of food for all the oceans' fish, too fragile an ecological system to allow it to be raped in the hope of successful exploitation. Industrial activity on Antarctica would tilt further the carbon dioxide imbalance in the atmosphere, drill larger holes in the Earth's protective ozone layer and precipitate global warming and the rise in sea level.

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My Government is heartened to learn that the 24 voting members of the 30-year-old Antarctic Treaty have signed an agreement which prohibits mining and oil exploration on Antarctica for 50 years. It is agreed that, at the end of this period, the ban could be lifted if two-thirds of the present members of the Treaty concur. My delegation is of the firm view that this agreement successfully curbs this generation's cupidity, which would otherwise imperil severely the good health of every succeeding generation. Antarctica's virginal tundras, unpopulated and undisturbed, ought not ever be violated.

But on the Earth's populated continents, a hand of reversal, laden with resources, is needed to save our planet from ecological disaster. My country thus welcomes the heightened awareness displayed by several multilateral funding agencies. In particular, we applaud the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme for their establishment of the Global Environmental Facility. Although $250 million will not be nearly sufficient to undo much of the damage inflicted on the environment, the creation of that fund is an admirable start. Further, we wish to urge the establishment of the Global Environment Technology Centre which is intended to oversee the transfer of sound technologies to all developing countries. If we are to hand over our Earth to the next generation with afflictions as few as our forebears handed to us, then the development process must take into account the harm to the environment which technology will inflict.

The underdevelopment of Africa is of special concern to my delegation. In 1957, when Kwame Nkrumah brought independence to Ghana, the people of Antigua and Barbuda were duly inspired. We regarded Africa's freedom as a necessary precursor to our own. Equally, we knew that Africa's development

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would herald our own. Since the early years of its independence, however, Africa's commodity earnings have declined considerably; terms of trade have worsened; conspiracies hatched in diverse other places undermined and terminated legitimate African leadership; civil strife fuelled by cold war concerns compromised stability; and, in some places, even the natural elements, including drought and disease, have seemingly conspired to decimate youthful populations. My delegation is of the firm view that resource flows into Africa must be greatly increased and that the United Nations system must be prepared to play a more significant role in Africa's rejuvenation.

Island-developing countries like my own will also look increasingly to the United Nations system for support. The United Nations Development Programme will be expected to increase its funding of projects. The Department of Technical Cooperation for Development will also be called upon to assume a greater role by expanding the technical expertise which it now provides. Enlarging the functions of these United Nations agencies will require larger contributions from developed countries. Freedom is not free and its promotion requires material gains if it is not to wither away. Here, leadership must take the lead.

We applaud the leadership in Angola for its magnanimous overtures to its once committed foes, and we urge the parties in Madagascar to continue to seek a peaceful solution to their crisis. My Government also eagerly awaits the results of the United Nations-supervised referendum on Western Sahara, and we urge respect for the results. Our hearts are with the Saharan people in this, its moment of truth.

Turning to Asia, we congratulate the two Koreas for the bold step which each has taken in assuming United Nations membership. Antigua and Barbuda

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welcomes the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to membership in this family of nations. We share the aspirations of the Korean people for a peaceful unification of their divided homeland. Our countrymen share their view that peace is indivisible and, thus, we sincerely hope that the unstable state of armistice which prevails on the peninsula will be replaced by a lasting peace soon.

My country is particularly heartened by the recent decisions of the warring factions in Cambodia to reduce their respective military forces by 70 per cent and to place the remainder under the direct supervision of the United Nations. We urge all the parties to strive to overcome their disagreement on holding free elections so as to ensure acceptance of the framework agreement established by the Security Council. Antigua and Barbuda commends the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his sustained efforts aimed at promoting dialogue among the combatants in Afghanistan. We believe this process will lead to a lasting peace. There now appears to be some movement on the question of Cyprus, and we urge inclusion of all the parties in the healing process. Likewise, the Middle East conflict appears to have reached a bend. We remain fixed in our view that an international peace conference should be convened. The interests of all concerned are best served through dialogue and negotiation in an atmosphere dedicated to peaceful resolution. The right of the Palestinians to a homeland of their own must become a reality and Israel must be allowed to exist within secure and accepted borders.

We rejoice with the people of Lebanon as its civil war appears to be coming to an end. May that very beautiful country once again retake its place as the region's crossroads of many cultures. The fratricidal war which rages

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in Yugoslavia is regrettable, and we encourage the European Communities to continue to seek a solution thereto. Their success will set an example for other regional groups. If the European Communities fail to settle this dispute, then to their own detriment they will have missed their first rendezvous with history.

I should like briefly to focus on my own region. We have condemned continuously the unjust economic systems which have caused civil wars to erupt in Central America. Until far-reaching economic reforms are instituted, Central America will continue to experience civil strife. Nevertheless, we encourage the parties in El Salvador to enter into negotiations so that peace may reign soon. In that regard, we congratulate the Governments of Guatemala and Belize for seeking an end to their border dispute and for establishing diplomatic relations on a friendly and permanent basis. President Serrano of Guatemala must be congratulated for displaying courage and foresight in a decade ripe for change.

As the final decade of the twentieth century unfolds, it is evident that the order which has governed international political and economic affairs over the preceding four decades is no more. Our world is no longer divided into two camps headed by super-Powers armed with competing ideologies. No longer can small or poor nations dart conveniently from one camp to the other in the hope of realizing special economic benefits. The ideological battle is over and so too is the material gain which would accrue to the membership in either camp.

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No one can tell with certainty what the emerging order holds in store. Will we inherit a world dominated by a single Power? Or will we inherit a multi-polar world with many Powers vying for hearts and minds? Or will we here succeed in fashioning a world where shape and form are given to major events by this our parliament of parliaments? Whatever the new order, my countrymen are acutely aware that ideology and imported economic theory do not guarantee development. Our experience teaches that it is the intelligent investment of capital - imported or domestic - and the application of human resources, driven by common-sense values and buttressed by institutions which promote freedom, that work together to assure development.

Our 10 years of independence have been largely successful because Antigua and Barbuda has had access to capital, and our people have demonstrated an extraordinary dynamism and faith. Within the past two years, however, the sources of capital have begun to shrink. An economic recession in our major capital market has made it increasingly difficult to obtain new investments therefrom. Official development assistance has simultaneously slowed to a trickle, and our largest foreign-exchange earner was this year battered by a war and a resulting fear of terrorism. Circumstances beyond the control of our policymakers thus threaten to undo 10 successful years of hard work.

In 1981, however, when our island country set off into the uncharted sea of independence, our Prime Minister, Vere C. Bird, forecast many storms. We see our current difficulties and our yet-to-be-achieved development goals as a challenge to be overcome by self-help and with the assistance of the international community. Antigua and Barbuda gives this community the assurance that 10 years hence - in the year 2001 - when we report on our

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20-year performance, this storm will have passed, this recession will be history, but the institutions, the courage, the faith and the wisdom that have defined the Antigua and Barbuda personality will have prevailed.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): After consultations carried out on my behalf, I have prepared a tentative programme of work and schedule for the General Assembly. I hope to keep to that schedule as closely as possible so that the Assembly may discharge its responsibilities in an orderly fashion. I therefore appeal to those representatives submitting draft resolutions to do so sufficiently in advance to give members adequate time to examine them.

I should also like to remind representatives that draft resolutions involving expenditure require more lead time, to enable the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee to review the programme budget implications before the Assembly takes action on those draft resolutions.

The following is the tentative programme of plenary meetings for the remainder of October.

On Wednesday, 16 October, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up agenda item 141, Observer status for the Caribbean Community in the General Assembly; agenda item 28, Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte; and agenda item 15 (a), Election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council.

(The President)

On Monday, 21 October, in the afternoon, and on Tuesday, 22 October, in the morning, the Assembly will take up agenda item 14, Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

On Tuesday, 22 October, in the afternoon, the Assembly will take up agenda item 23, Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin; and agenda item 17 (a), Election of twenty-nine members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme.

On Thursday, 24 October, in the morning, the Assembly will take up agenda item 22, Programme and activities to promote peace in the world; agenda item 26, Tenth anniversary of the University of Peace; agenda item 17 (d), Election of twelve members of the World Food Council; and agenda item 17 (e), Election of seven members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

On Monday, 28 October, in the afternoon, the Assembly will take up agenda item 25, Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System; agenda item 27, Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference; agenda item 30, Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity; and agenda item 34, Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

I should like to remind members that when the Assembly fixed Monday, 14 September 1992, as the date for the closing of the forty-sixth session it also fixed Tuesday, 17 December 1991, as the date for the Assembly to recess until next year.

I wish to inform representatives that the Pledging Conference for Development Activities will be held in the mornings of Tuesday, 5 November, and Wednesday, 6 November. The Conference will be opened by the Secretary-General.

(The President)

This tentative schedule that I have just announced will appear in the verbatim record of the meeting, as well as in the Journal summary. I shall keep the Assembly informed of any additions or changes.

The list of speakers for all the items I have mentioned is now open.

AGENDA ITEM 9 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. MESFIN (Ethiopia): Allow me, Sir, to extend to you my heartfelt congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. We are particularly pleased that the representative of Saudi Arabia, with which Ethiopia enjoys close and friendly relations, is presiding over this Assembly. It is my pleasure to assure you of my delegation's fullest cooperation as you discharge your responsibility.

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

I also wish to express our sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Guido de Marco, for his able stewardship of the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session. Indeed it was gratifying to have received Mr. de Marco in Ethiopia in June 1991, barely a few days after the downfall of the military dictatorship that ruthlessly brutalized and dishonoured our country during the past 17 years. Mr. de Marco's fruitful visit to Ethiopia has helped to make the plight of hundreds of thousands of refugees from neighbouring countries a focal point of international attention and concern.

I should like to take this opportunity also to pay a tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, for his distinguished service to our Organization, and to congratulate him on leaving behind an Organization with greatly enhanced stature and credibility. We wish him success and good luck.

Let me also extend my warmest welcome to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, the Baltic Republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands on their becoming Members of our Organization during the current session.

The profound changes taking place throughout the world have brought about the emergence of democratic transformation. Now that the cold war is over, international relations have tended to promote cooperation in place of confrontation. Peace is indeed taking root, and freedom is on the march, with peoples, nations and nationalities exercising their rights to self-determination. Tyranny and repression are being wiped out by peoples in full exercise of their will, taking their destiny into their own hands. They are winning in their pursuit of freedom, democracy and justice.

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

The victory of the Ethiopian people over a ruthless military dictatorship is a case in point. I beg the indulgence of the Assembly to speak briefly on the painful experience of the past 17 years in Ethiopia before dealing with the current situation in my country.

The international community is aware of the unparalleled suffering and misery endured by the Ethiopian peoples. The blatant policy of war and repression pursued by the defunct terrorist regime, coupled with recurrent droughts and famine, inflicted an enormous human toll. It should be recalled that premeditated murder of innocent people was the order of the day. Youngsters in their teens were rounded up from schools, streets and homes for forced military conscription. Villages were destroyed by blanket bombing aimed at suppressing people who wanted to be free. The cruel war uprooted hundreds of thousands. A great number of people perished, while others fled in search of refuge to countries near and far.

I cannnot but note with regret and sadness the deafening silence of the United Nations system in the face of gross violations of human rights and its failure to make tangible efforts to stop the mayhem in my country. It is our considered view that this international Organization, whose cardinal objective is "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", should have spoken out with sufficient vigour, instead of hiding behind a convenient excuse to justify inaction when confronted with the most egregious human rights violations and continual bloodshed.

In contrast, donor nations and non-governmental organizations spoke and acted with tremendous dignity and compassion. In spite of the familiar "food as a weapon" policy of the regime, they persisted in their determination to

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

provide, and sometimes succeeded in providing, timely assistance to victims of drought and famine in our country. We sincerely appreciate this humanitarian commitment.

The downfall of the military junta and the sucessful take-over of state power by democratic forces on 28 May 1991 marked the beginning of a new era of peace, democracy and justice in Ethiopia. At the time when the junta in Addis Ababa was crumbling, talks on ending the war were being held in London on 24 May 1991, under the mediation of the United States Government. In this regard, I should like to seize this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Government of the United States of America and in particular to Ambassador Herman Cohen, a distinguished and able diplomat, the official mediator on behalf of the United States Government, for the painstaking efforts made to arrange the London peace talks, in which the former parties to the Ethiopian conflict took part.

It was agreed in London to convene a National Conference in Addis Ababa on 1 July to chart the future political course of the country. The Conference, held on schedule, brought together 24 organizations representing a wide range of political views and aspirations of various nationalities. We were delighted to note that the National Conference on Peace and Democracy was honoured by the presence of international observers, including representatives of 16 Governments, the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the European Community. Their attendance at the Conference has strengthened our determination to work closely with the international community in resolving the formidable problems and challenges confronting our country.

The National Conference has charted the future course Ethiopia will follow. It has adopted a charter explicitly based on the United Nations

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

Declaration of Human Rights. This charter is the supreme law of the land for the transitional period, which will lead to multi-party elections to be conducted in about two years. In accordance with the provisions of the charter, the people have begun freely expressing their views. Political parties have emerged and are already introducing their programmes to the people in the run-up to free and fair elections.

A broad-based administration, embracing various political groups, is in place, acting in the framework of a coalition Government. A landmark principle of the charter is recognition of the rights of nations and nationalities to exercise self-determination, which is the cornerstone of the democratic processes embarked upon by the peoples of Ethiopia. This has opened up new avenues for forging harmonious peace and unity on the basis of universal human values. We do not believe that there can be lasting peace in our country without recognition and application of this cardinal principle.

It has often been said derisively that self-determination would lead to fragmentation and chaos. However, our experience, like that of some countries in Eastern Europe, proves otherwise. To be sure, the denial of the right of self-determination of the various nationalities in Ethiopia and the disregard for their aspiration to equality were the major causes of the civil strife we experienced.

It is important to emphasize that recognition of these basic rights by the Transitional Government has done more than consolidate peace: it has also become a significant factor in convincing many groups which in the past worked for separation that their grievances could best be redressed in a new Ethiopia

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

on the basis of recognition of the right of self-determination as the bedrock of its political life. Those groups have therefore decided to give unity a chance.*

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* Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

The position taken by the Conference on Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia with respect to resolving the long-standing Eritrean conflict must be seen in the context of the imperative need to maintain stability and peace and create conditions propitious to the success of the process of democratization in the area.

Respect for the rights of the Eritrean people to determine their future freely in an internationally supervised referendum is, therefore, an integral element of the democratic process aimed at achieving durable peace and stability. In this regard, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia welcomes the decision of the Provisional Government in Eritrea to defer the holding of a referendum for two years, as well as its desire to involve the United Nations in supervising the process.

The introduction of political pluralism in Ethiopia is being complemented by new thinking in the economic sphere. The transitional legislature and cabinet will soon approve and adopt an economic policy for the transitional period. A draft economic policy which is currently being discussed and scrutinized by the people envisages the formulation of strategies that could accelerate recovery and reconstruction.

The main thrust of this policy is its greater emphasis on private enterprise and market forces as instruments of revitalization of growth and development. It takes into account the need to overcome problems such as famine relief and rehabilitation of displaced persons and demobilized soldiers, in the short run, and the need to expedite the process of laying down the necessary basis for sustainable development, including overcoming environmental degradation and ensuring food security, in the long run.

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

It is evident that all this will require vast resources, far beyond the means available to us. It will therefore call for the mobilization of international assistance in coping with the emergency situation. In this regard, it should be stated clearly that the international community should spare no efforts tangibly to encourage and support the fledgling peace and democratic process in Ethiopia.

Although significant progress has been made towards ensuring peace and democracy in Ethiopia, formidable challenges still confront us. Famine still prevails in Ethiopia, thus threatening the very livelihood of millions of our citizens. Food shortages caused by the recurrent drought and severe environmental degradation persist. Millions of refugees from neighbouring countries and an equal number or more of our own citizens displaced by war are in a desperate situation and are in need of urgent assistance. The infrastructure, shattered by the protracted conflicts, calls for immediate attention. Our economy is completely in shambles due to past disastrous policies and is burdened with a huge loan, the responsibility of the past regime. It therefore needs to be revived, an undertaking beyond Ethiopia's capacity.

The accumulation of the economic and social problems to which I have referred not only is bound to prolong our people's life of misery and destitution, but also could frustrate our determination to promote lasting peace, stability and democracy.

It goes without saying that it is for us Ethiopians, first and foremost, to put our house in order and resolve our own problems, however vast and complicated they may be. Already the Transitional Government has set a national policy and is mobilizing the people for the difficult but compulsory

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

task of rehabilitation and reconstruction. We are hopeful that the international community will respond positively to our request for assistance and supplement our domestic efforts.

Let me, at this juncture, turn to the foreign policy of the Transitional Government. Now that Ethiopia is at peace with itself, the opportunities to become a factor for peace and stability in the Horn of Africa - a region torn by conflicts - are greater. Our foreign policy objective is to further and cement ties and promote fraternal common interests with all our neighbours.

We are determined to maintain friendly relations with all our neighbours - indeed with all nations - based on principles of mutual respect for the sovereignty and equality of States, non-interference in the affairs of others and the promotion of mutual interests. To this end, we have already taken confidence-building measures. For example, we have waived visa requirements for citizens of neighbouring countries with a view to facilitating cross-fertilization of ideas and communication in order to enhance trade and commerce. We have undertaken measures to preclude the use of our territory by armed opposition groups for destabilization purposes. We are dedicated to do everything possible to bring about peaceful resolution of the fratricidal conflicts in which our brothers and sisters across our borders are engaged. Discussions and consultations are already under way to identify the ventures and joint endeavours which we can develop and harness for our common development needs.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of African Unity, Ethiopia is committed to the promotion of international peace and security. Accordingly, we are concerned that peace in the Middle East still hangs in the balance even as the efforts of the United

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

States Secretary of State, Mr. James Baker, are making significant headway towards bringing the parties to the conference table. As a country in close proximity to the region, Ethiopia welcomes such encouraging developments and hopes that the Palestinian question, which is the core of the Middle East problem, will eventually be resolved in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Similarly, we have followed with great interest the encouraging developments in South Africa. While we regard with satisfaction the repeal of repressive apartheid laws and the ongoing dialogue among the political groups in the country, it is important that the process should continue and should lead to the abolition of the apartheid system and the establishment of a non-racial, democratic and united South Africa,

The United Nations plan on Western Sahara has come a long way with the establishment of the United Nations Mission on the Referendum in Western Sahara. We are hopeful that the efforts of the United Nations in this regard will be crowned with success.

We are anxious about the unfinished business before the United Nations regarding resolution of conflicts. Peaceful settlements in Cambodia, Afghanistan and Cyprus are critical to the consolidation of world peace.

Meanwhile, we are gratified to note the significant reductions in the level of nuclear armaments. Negotiations under way between the super-Powers for further cuts and the recent decision by the Government of the United States to scrap substantial portions of its short-range missile arsenal, as well as the latest proposals by the Soviet Union to match and even accelerate these efforts, will hopefully further the goals of eliminating weapons of mass destruction.

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

In this connection, we support the need for disarmament negotiations to include conventional weapons as well, in the interests of consolidating peace and in conformity with the current trend towards democracy and respect for human rights. It should be stated that the dividends from disarmament efforts should be used to ameliorate the pitiable socio-economic conditions in many parts of the world, thus satisfying the material and spiritual needs of peoples.

Despite reforms and growth-oriented measures in several countries, most developing countries continue to suffer an ever-increasing decline in standards of living, food production, incomes, and health and educational services. Not only are we witnessing widespread poverty in both the urban and the rural areas of the developing world, but the gap in incomes between the developed and developing countries has been expanding. In particular, the situation in Africa is pathetic, to say the least. After five years the United Nations Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development has very little to its account.

Today, the lot of Africans has deteriorated even further. There is less food but more mouths to feed; there is more export but less earnings, little savings but little investment; there is more outflow of resources but less inflow of imported goods.

How can Africa be expected to address its central structural problems when income earnings continue to decline owing to the collapse of commodity prices? The external-debt burden and debt-servicing obligations of African countries, which as a percentage of gross national product rose from 54 per cent in 1986 to 109 per cent in 1990, have siphoned off from Africa

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

resources that could have been otherwise used for the programme of economic transformation. Furthermore, official development assistance during 1986-1990, which in real terms remained constant at an annual average of $US 16.5 billion, is woefully inadequate.

In presenting this bleak picture our intention is not to apportion blame or to deny the importance of the domestic policies of recipient countries. What is needed is a sincere approach and commitment by both developed and developing countries, in a spirit of understanding and accommodation, to address realistically the development bottlenecks in the third world.

There is serious international concern regarding environmental degradation. In particular, the region where my country is located is threatened by an alarming increase in desertification. Drought and the successive decline of life-supporting resources have taken a heavy toll. The situation calls for concerted international action to help sustain the minimal resources still available. We hope the forthcoming Conference on Environment and Development to be held at Rio de Janeiro will be both global and specific in scope and produce concrete measures to halt the accelerated pace of environmental degradation, including the problems of encroaching desertification.

In conclusion, let me say that we have come with an open mind and with devotion, and that we will thus spare no effort in the collective search for peace throughout the world as well as for progress and development through more freedom and respect for human dignity. We remain convinced that no better means than the instrumentality of the United Nations system exists for ensuring and strengthening the solidarity of nations in the attainment of those noble objectives and in solving common problems in compliance with the

(Mr. Mesfin, Ethiopia)

Charter of the United Nations. The new Ethiopia that now finds itself at an important threshold in its history pledges its loyalty to the lofty ideals and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. PETERS (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Within the past few years the world has witnessed a series of momentous and dramatic political events. These followed closely on the remarkable changes in East-West relations and other positive developments in the international arena. The nations of the world have found new hope for a brighter future, and there has been renewed faith in the United Nations as the forum in which political, social and other issues can be constructively addressed.

It is at this historic juncture that the delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines wishes to congratulate the President most sincerely on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. As a founding member, his country has had a long association with the United Nations, and we regard this first attempt on its part to seek the Chair of a major organ of this Organization as a manifestation of the national desire to play a wider and more proactive role in the post-cold-war era of international relations. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has the undoubted capability of becoming an influential player. My delegation looks forward with confidence to a rewarding and successful session under his experienced and visionary leadership.

I should also like to congratulate his immediate predecessor, Professor the Honourable Guido de Marco of Malta, who conducted the affairs of the forty-fifth session in a skilful and exemplary manner appropriate to this epoch of world history.

(Mr. Peters, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

On behalf of the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I wish to extend a warm welcome to the seven new Members admitted at this session of the General Assembly. Their admission gives further hope for eventual universality of membership in the United Nations. In the case of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we express the hope that separate membership in this world Organization will help to promote the fulfilment of the historic desire of the Korean people for unification. We have much in common with the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. Their admission highlights the special position of developing countries in today's world of powerful economic blocs. My delegation also takes pleasure in welcoming Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, all former members of the League of Nations, to membership in the Organization that has succeeded it. Their admission represents a triumph for democracy and self-determination. Our experience, however, induces us to caution these Baltic States against pinning their faith in the narrow context of "nationalism". We would advise that they build on the trade and fiscal harmony they have historically enjoyed among themselves and their neighbours rather than plunge as small nation States into international rivalry.

On this occasion I wish also to express the profound appreciation of the delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the distinguished Secretary-General for his skill and commitment in handling the affairs of the Organization and in promoting the goals and objectives of the United Nations. We also commend him for his usual instructive and thoughtful report.

(Mr. Peters, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

Over the past decade the Secretary-General has presided over our Organization, bringing it from the nadir of esteem to its rightful place at the zenith of world government. We all owe him a debt of gratitude, and we wish him good health and long life so that in his retirement he can witness the continuation of his outstanding work towards the realization of lasting world peace built on solid foundations of respect for human rights, territorial integrity, democracy and economic prosperity.

I join my Caribbean colleagues in soliciting the support of Member countries for the application of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for observer status in the General Assembly on terms similar to those that have been prescribed for other associations of States. We are of the view that an observer relationship with the United Nations will greatly enhance CARICOM's ability to coordinate the activities of Member States in its areas of competence.

In our part of the world, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues vigorously to promote unification among the countries of the Windward Islands. Harsh reality has taught us that irrespective of the efficiency of national economic management and planning within any one of our micro-States it is virtually impossible to satisfy the rising expectations and demands of our populations.

Current initiatives to establish political union among the four Windward Islands represent a concerted attempt to merge the limited resources of those islands to create an enhanced environment for economic growth and development. In this regard, Saint Yincent and the Grenadines has faithfully honoured its commitment to the free trade provisions within the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States as well as recently enacted measures aimed at

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stimulating production and consumption of CARICOM goods and services. Even as we face, together with other developing countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group, possible harmful effects on our economies owing to developments in the European Economic Community after 1992, we continue to pursue structural-adjustment policies intended to further our integration into the world economy. We, the banana-producing countries in the Caribbean, being essentially small mountainous islands, have difficulty competing with large-scale consortiums in other countries, and our democracy and social progress could well be damaged by any sudden denial of our trading arrangements in a post-1992 Europe. We would hope that the assurances given to us in the Lomé Convention will be honoured in letter and in spirit.

My delegation views with satisfaction the recent developments in Central America. In Santiago in June, at its twenty-first regular session, the Organization of American States celebrated the triumph of democracy in the hemisphere by issuing the Santiago Commitment to Democracy. It was the first time in the history of the organization that all the Governments in attendance were democratically elected. We also welcomed the admission of Guyana and Belize as full members of the organization

My Government is pleased with the continued development of functional and economic co-operation between Guyana and Venezuela. The delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is particularly pleased with the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Belize and the Republic of Guatemala. This is an important event formalizing the existing friendly relations between the two Governments and establishing a harmonious environment for the resolution of outstanding issues between the two States. My Government stands ready to assist in the resolution of these historical disputes in our region.

(Mr. Peters, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

The delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines wishes to express its appreciation to the international community for the assistance given to Haiti in holding free and fair elections in which that long-suffering country was able to select its first democratically elected President. Now that the democratic process has once more been abruptly sabotaged, we hope that every effort will be made to ensure its restoration as soon as possible. We must act now, swiftly and decisively.

The delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines wishes to congratulate the people of Suriname on the peaceful and dignified manner in which they conducted their recent elections.

With the attainment of independence by Namibia the full struggle against apartheid has shiffed to South Africa. The South African President, Mr. F.W. De Klerk, has liffed the ban on political organizations and individuals in South Africa. This was followed by the repeal of certain laws and increased dialogue between the Government and the African National Congress. These are welcome indications of the beginning of real progress in the initiation of a genuine process for the abolition of apartheid. We are, however, concerned about the continuing violence taking place in South Africa, and we welcomed the agreement of the Government and all other parties on the procedures to be followed for containing the violence.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has consistently joined the call for intensification of the campaign to eradicate apartheid and will remain committed to its complete abolition.

Powerful winds of democratization and independence are sweeping through the Soviet Union. Fundamental changes in the relationship between the central Government and the Soviet republics mark a watershed in the political

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evolution of that once powerful nation in modern-day history. While we hail the independence of the Baltic States and other Soviet republics, we wish to express the hope that, in the interest of world peace, some controlling authority will remain intact, in whatever governmental arrangement that eventually evolves from the current fluid situation, to exercise control over the enormous nuclear arsenal in the possession of that military super-Power. My delegation is heartened by the Soviet announcement that control of nuclear weapons will be centralized under one specifIc unit of the military.

In the view of my delegation that is critical for continued negotiation of effective arms-control agreements, for the maintenance of Soviet credibility as a major broker in the Middle East peace process, and for the ability of that country positively to influence events in other areas of tension.

The delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines believes that this is an era of great opportunity for the removal of the world-wide threat of nuclear warfare. In that regard we commend the historic unilateral action of President George Bush in eliminating entire categories of certain nuclear weapons and in offering to negotiate further sharp reductions in the most dangerous kinds of globe-spanning missiles. We are delighted by the reciprocal response of President Mikhail Gorbachev, and we hope that other nuclear Powers will respond in kind in order to accelerate the process of arms reduction and bring us closer to the ideal of turning swords into ploughshares.

My delegation reiterates its strong commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes among States. The Gulf war is now behind us, but the international community must continue to recognize the potential for conflict which remains in the Middle East.

(Mr. Peters, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

In our statement at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines put forward its views on a peace conference to deal with the recurring problems of the Middle East. We therefore welcome the diplomatic efforts of President Bush and Secretary of State Baker in convening a duly structured international conference. We view this as the key to a lasting solution of the conflict. The delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains convinced that any solution to the problem facing the region must be predicated on the legitimate concerns of the Palestinian people and the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to live in peace and security within recognised borders, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Only a final resolution of these problems will make us confident that the Middle East will be at peace, and that the rich oil resources of the region will be governed by the marketplace rather than the political agenda.

The end of the cold war between East and West has resulted in unprecedented progress being made in the peaceful resolution of other regional conflicts by political means. The search for peace in Cambodia, Afghanistan and other hot spots of the globe has intensifled. Increased cooperation among the five permanent members of the Security Council and the expanded role of the United Nations in the area of conflict resolution are manifest in the initiatives which have been taken to achieve political solutions in Angola, Ethiopia, Cyprus and Western Sahara. There is no doubt that these positive changes in the world have been propelled by the harmonious relations that have developed between the Soviet Union and the United States in recent years.

(Mr. Peters, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

The world watched with bated breath as the events of August unfolded in the Soviet Union. We saw the prospect of the reversal of the gains of glasnost and perestroika and a return to the totalitarian communist ways of old. But the people of the USSR had seen a new day of freedom, democracy and hope and had defeated the reactionaries with their indomitable will, bare hands and massive numbers. It is a great victory for the human spirit and the delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines salutes the people of that vast country and the leadership that rallied them.

In the atmosphere of freedom and euphoria of the immediate post-cold-war era, many long-subdued ethnic and regional conflicts are surfacing with possible disastrous effects. President Bush has called it a "resumption of history", and the United Nations faces a new set of challenges in these areas - namely, to preserve the peace without suppressing human rights and the self-determination of peoples. My delegation praises the efforts of the countries of the European Community, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the United Nations Security Council to resolve the Yugoslavian crisis.

It is undeniable that the world body has scored impressive points in dealing with political issues and also in the maintenance of international peace and security through an increased level of cooperation among the major Powers. In the area of economic and social development, however, little progress has been made towards the improvement of the institutional capacity of the United Nations to deal with certain economic and social issues. With the spirit of cooperation existing in the Organization, the time is opportune

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for concerted action to reform the Economic and Social Council to make it a more relevant and responsive forum for focusing on priority policy themes.

The present window of opportunity also allows for real progress in the reform of other areas of the United Nations. These should include the process of selecting the Secretary-General, reorganization of the Secretariat, with special emphasis on accountability and reporting relationships, and streamlining the General Assembly agenda and committee system. The delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is aware that the discussion on restructuring is a continuous process which requires sustained consultation and the widest participation of Member States. We support the step-by-step process and agree with those who feel that only those proposals on which there is consensus should be presented for consideration by the General Assembly.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is deeply concerned at the increased activities and costly implications of transnational drug trafficking. Trafficking in drugs is not an isolated national issue. It transcends all national boundaries and calls for increased cooperation on a multinational basis.

The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has declared a relentless war against drug dealers and their supporters and we welcome the increased commitment of the international community to cooperate and collaborate on efforts to eliminate the production, trafficking and abuse of illicit narcotics.

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One of the most formidable challenges of our time is the protection of our environment. The ever-growing list of threats is by now well known: global warming, desertification, deforestation, and the ever-increasing volume of waste, to mention a few. These phenomena threaten the very existence of our planet and require an energetic global response. In this regard, we fully support the convening of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Such a conference must establish an international strategy by adopting ways and means of obtaining environmentally sound development in all countries of the world.

My delegation believes that the Rio Conference presents a great opportunity to develop realistic global measures for the protection of the environment. The Conference must not become a forum for the apportionment of blame or for pontification by those trying to take the high ground in the area of environmental protection. If the nations of the world could agree to a comprehensive programme of international cooperation in the field of environmental protection within an international framework that takes all aspects into consideration, including the development priorities of island States of limited land mass, and the imperatives of sustainable development worldwide, then the Rio Conference would be a seminal event in the history of our planet Earth. We cannot afford to fail.

In closing, let me urge all Member States to continue to demonstrate their unwavering confidence in this institution. The United Nations can only be as successful as its Member States allow it to be. History has saddled us with a heavy burden of responsibility, and as we look towards the twenty-first century, we must redouble our efforts to achieve the goals and ideals

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enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations: peace, security, human rights and fundamental freedoms, international cooperation and development for all mankind.

Mr. ROGERS (Belize): We enter the post-cold-war era inspired by the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, in which are enshrined the right to self-determination of peoples, respect for their human rights, and the ultimate goal of peace and international security. The recent movements towards political democratization in Eastern Europe, and indeed throughout the world, highlight the desire of man to live in peace, harmony and cooperation. They inspire hope for a freer society and an even better future for the generations yet unborn.

In the midst of this prospect for global peace, in certain parts of this planet Earth, the tragedies of war are blatantly evident, where misery, poverty, hunger, disease and economic decline are tearing apart the fabric of society.

The United Nations is called upon to answer the challenges that emerge with these changing times, in accordance with the principles promulgated by the Charter of the United Nations.

The delegation of Belize extends its sincere tribute to Ambassador Shihabi of Saudi Arabia on his election as President of the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. We are confident that his consummate diplomatic dexterity, which has distinguished him in this family of nations, will lead to the successful deliberations of the session. My Government recognizes the role of Saudi Arabia in the League of Arab States, the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, and indeed in the international community.

(Mr. Rogers, Belize)

My country, Belize, is proud, and I am honoured, to serve as Vice-President during the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

(Mr. Rogers, Belize)

My delegation salutes Mr. Guido de Marco of Malta, who presided over the forty-fifth session with wisdom, vigour and dedication, responding to a rapidly changing world.

We hold the highest esteem for the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, who hails from our region and who continues to lead this dynamic Organization with determination and conviction in the global quest for peace and cooperation among all peoples. His peace-making efforts are bearing fruit in many parts of the world.

This Organization is today enriched by the admission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the three Baltic States - the Republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. We welcome them to this great family of nations and encourage their contribution to advancing the principles of the United Nations. Belize joins other delegations in extending congratulations to them at this crucial juncture in their history and pledges full support to work closely with the newly admitted States.

Forty-five years ago, the United Nations was born of the pursuit of peace and international security. This great institution has steered the course for societies where there is respect for the human person, where equal opportunities are available and where the dignity of man is upheld. But we are still faced with new challenges and uncertainties which emerge after the years of conflict. Our universal interest lies in our search for peace, freedom and justice.

The forty-sixth session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when confrontation between the super-Powers has turned to cooperation, when a

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new world order is being shaped and when economic reforms are replacing the trade barriers and protectionism of industrialized economies.

Ten years ago the Prime Minister of Belize stood in this Hall on the occasion of the admission of Belize to this Organization. It was a momentous occasion in the fulfilment of the Belizean people's right to self-determination. After years of diplomatic struggle, Belize finally stood before the world community as an independent nation with a Constitution which acknowledges the supremacy of God, faith in human rights and fundamental freedoms and commitment to the promotion of international peace, security and cooperation among all nations.

Yet there was one nation which did not accept our independence and sovereignty because of an ancient dispute of a bygone colonial era. A decade has now passed and one civilian Government in Guatemala has been succeeded by another. The recognition by the Government of President Jorge Serrano of the independence and sovereignty of Belize, followed by the establishment of full diplomatic relations between our two countries a few weeks ago, on 11 September, marks the beginning of a new chapter in the relations between our two countries. It ushers in a new era of a relationship based on mutual respect, equality, dignity and cooperation. The decision of my Government to adopt maritime legislation which extends our territorial sea to 12 miles while maintaining the existing three miles territorial sea in the southern waters of Belize removes a source of potential friction and guarantees Guatemala's access to the Caribbean. It is our firm conviction that this process clears the way for the final phase of reconciliation, while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both our countries.

(Mr. Rogers, Belize)

A major step has been taken for peace and stability in our region. The climate for more development and the economic advancement of our people will be enhanced by this pragmatic approach to the solution of our remaining differences. Belize is now able to take its rightful place as a Caribbean nation in Central America.

My Government is grateful to the international community for the support for the agreement expressed by several delegations during this general debate. In view of this achievement, we commit ourselves to continuing the peace process and integration of our region and beyond, in pursuance of the Esquipulas II Agreement.

The broad agreement reached between the Government of President Alfredo Cristiani and the FMLN, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, is an indicator that advances in the social and political life of El Salvador may lead to the end of the civil war, and indeed to peace throughout Central America.

The Government of Belize supports the decision of the Organization of American States (OAS) to isolate the military junta which overthrew the democratically elected Government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti. My Government lends its support, too, to the resolution which calls for the suspension of economic, commercial, diplomatic and military assistance to the military junta and for the full restoration of democracy in Haiti.

With regard to another area in our region, Belize would like to see the resolution of differences between the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba through peaceful negotiations.

My delegation is heartened at the intiatives in South Africa towards a non-racial society. We are particularly pleased at the continuation of

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negotiations by the South African Government and the African National Congress. Belize, however, scoffs at the racial structures still in place and supports earlier calls by the international community for their complete removal and dismantling. We stand at the threshold of the twenty-first century with renewed conviction that all men are created equal. The decades of suffering of the black population of South Africa cannot continue. It is time to end the senseless slaughter of our brothers and sisters. It is time for a society freed of hate.

The Middle East continues to be volatile and an area of grave concern. It is our sincere hope that the peace conference to be convened this month will succeed, that international law will be applied, that the aspirations of the people of that region will be fulfilled, and that the relevant United Nations resolutions will be implemented.

The plight of the Palestinian people continues to heighten the already explosive region and worsens the prospects of peace and justice. Their right to a homeland must be established in any agreement in the search for a long lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Once again, the fundamental principles of the Charter for the peaceful settlement of disputes and the self-determination of peoples must be put to work.

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the noble task of the Secretary-General in exerting ardent efforts for the release of the remaining hostages in Lebanon. We pray for their early release.

The children continue to be the key element in the social development of our societies. One year ago the world community gathered here for the first

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United Nations World Summit for Children to promote strategies to ensure their survival, protection and well-being. A few weeks ago the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that, though world leaders had made an encouraging start, a high level of public vigilance is still needed to meet the commitments to the 27 goals set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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Let us intensify our efforts and devote our energies to eradicate hunger and the social evils that threaten the family unit and the survival of future generations. Let us resolve to improve the quality of life and totally eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, the mothers of our children.

Public concern and awareness for the protection of the environment have heightened in the past years from the emergence of "earth patriotism". Work has already begun on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development that is to take place in Brazil next year and that will consider such issues as climate change and biological diversity. Belize welcomes the results of the Second World Climate Conference and the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depletion, but we are aware that efforts must be stepped up to prevent environmental degradation.

The successful conclusion of the 1992 Conference and the adoption of a plan of action require a global consensus to deal effectively with the degradation and depletion of the environment. The solution to the common problems of poverty, overpopulation and the lack of technology, coupled with the consumption of industrial waste, will require new and innovative approaches and other mechanisms for the preservation of God's gift to mankind.

Belize is committed to the great task of protecting the survival of man's natural heritage. My Government has just put in place impressive legislation to regulate activities that affect the environment, including the protection of wildlife, the establishment of national parks and reserves, the regulation of land, and the control of pesticides. In this regard, Belize is the proud home of the second largest barrier reef in the world. Its preservation is vital. It is not only for Belizeans to enjoy and its loss would be felt

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globally. International assistance is necessary if we are to protect this heritage of man and the biodiversity that goes with it.

In the social sector, the issue of environment is being integrated into national life. At present the study of the environment is being included in the school curriculum.

Our efforts towards this global challenge must extend beyond our political borders. Belize has therefore articulated its environmental policies in line with other Caribbean countries which share similar environmental concerns.

Concern over the production, traffic in, and use of drugs continues to increase in this global community as this plague becomes one of the major causes of crime and destruction in our societies. This scourge that afflicts indiscriminately, transcending borders, must be addressed in concert. In Belize, my Government is utilizing all resources to control drugs and psychotropic substances and to combat traffickers. Belize has also reached agreements with the United States of America and Mexico in the war against this threat to humanity. Belize calls for concerted action to eradicate the production and use of drugs. We strongly applaud the establishment and the ideals of the international drug control programme of the United Nations.

As regards the world economy, Belize is one of the few countries in our hemisphere that is showing sound economic growth. The economic position of the other developing countries has deteriorated despite a noted increase in world trade. There has been a marked increase in foreign direct investment in the past few years, but the share to developing countries has been reduced.

The debt crisis has placed an extra burden on the economies of developing countries, which are experiencing a net outflow of resources. The external

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debt of developing countries has peaked to a staggering $1.2 trillion. The effects of this have bred instability, increased poverty and misery, and generally deteriorated the quality of life.

The reactivation of economic growth can best be achieved through a dynamic trading system that will allow exports of goods from developing countries to the markets of the industrialized countries, the restructuring of indebtedness, increased lending from creditors, and increased foreign investment flows. Creditor nations must bear the responsibility to provide more financial resources to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank if the economies of the poor countries are to be transformed. International development finance is needed to help the economies of small and poor States.

We are heartened at the efforts of the international community to press for the success of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

The shaping of a new world order in the aftermath of the cold war gives us a renewed opportunity to remove the old causes of war. Hunger, poverty, disease, illiteracy and social justice must now be tackled in earnest. The information and communications revolution serves only to inform poor sick people that medicines and cures exist which they can never afford. There is now an urgent need to bring the state of the art in medical technology to all peoples wherever they live. It is disappointing for us to be informed by satellite television and magazines of the most modern technology, which we can never hope to obtain.

The experiment in the Soviet Union has shown us that the forces of oppression cannot conquer the indomitable human spirit. This is the era of

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democracy and the empowerment of peoples everywhere. Glasnost must be accompanied by perestroika in order for people to benefit fully. Democracy must work hand in hand with sustainable economic development so that the quality of life can be improved.

Democracy cannot flourish on economic development alone. More attention must be focused on arms limitation and disarmament. Greater vigilance with regard to the reduction of nuclear weapons and greater support of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by the international community could lead to the eventual destruction of weapons of mass destruction. In this connection, Belize welcomes both President Bush's recent initiatives to reduce nuclear arsenals further and the response by President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union to match the reductions.

The reduction of military expenditures estimated at $1,000 billion must be a priority of developing countries.

Radical changes the world over are making new demands on the role and work of the United Nations. The climate of today is far different from that of 45 years ago when the United Nations was born in response to super-Power rivalry. To deal more effectively with these new circumstances, reform and strengthening of the United Nations must be carried out to ensure that decisions taken reflect the will of the majority of Member States. The General Assembly then is the forum where every individual Member State has an equal right of vote.

It is our hope that in this body we will find the strength to meet the challenges of a new world order. May God bless our efforts.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.